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COUNTRY **China (Sinkiang Province)**
SUBJECT **The Uighur Race of Sinkiang**

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1. Number in Sinkiang: The Uighur race of Sinkiang is also referred to, both in Sinkiang and in English-language texts on that province, as Uigur, Wei-wu-erh, Hui-hui, Ch'an Hui (Turbaned Moslems), Ch'an-t'ou (Turban Heads), Chanto, Moslem, Sart and Turki. According to a 1941 survey they numbered 2,900,173, or a little less than 80% of the total population of Sinkiang. Because the Uighurs are the predominant race of Sinkiang they have, in the past, been referred to by the name of the oases that they resided in, such as Turfanliks, Kashesarliks, Qomuliks, etc.
2. Origin of the Name: Historically, the name Uighur first appeared in records of the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A D) as the name of a tribal confederation of pastoral nomads living along the Selenga River, in what is now the northern part of the Mongolian People's Republic. Prior to 1934, when Governor Sheng Shih-tsai revived the use of this name in Sinkiang, the Uighurs were referred to only by the name of the particular oasis that they inhabited.
3. History of the Race: The Uighurs are a highly civilized race that inhabited Central Asia over a thousand years ago. In 840 the Uighur power in Mongolia was destroyed by the Kirghiz. The Uighur warriors were subsequently forced to withdraw to the southwest, where they took over the oases north of the Tien Shan range. They later infiltrated, in large numbers, into the oases south of the mountains and made themselves rulers of the indigenous population. The people among whom the Uighurs settled absorbed them, but adopted their name and tongue. These people then enjoyed several flourishing civilizations and are considered to be the only original inhabitants of Sinkiang. The period of Uighur domination was brought to an end in the twelfth century by the invasion of the Khara Khitai, who were in turn overthrown by Genghis Khan. The Mongol Khans continued to rule over this area until 1566, when the local Hodjas (Uighur prelates) took over complete control. Their influence continued to some extent even after the invasion of the Jungar Mongols in 1650 and the replacement of Jungar rule by the Manchus in 1756. The Sinkiang Uighurs of today are considered to be of Iranian-Turkic origin and closely related to the ancient Uighur race.

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4. Language: In the process of amalgamating with the indigenous population of Sinkiang, the Uighurs were able to impose their own language on the other people. Their present-day language is uniform except for minor differences of dialect. It is the Uighur dialect of the Turkic language and falls into the Altaic group of the linguistic families. Uighur is written with the Arabic script, which is no more suited to it than it is to other Turkic languages. Those Uighurs who can only read the language are called Mora, the fully literate take the title of Ahun.
5. Religion: The Uighurs, prior to their withdrawal to the Tarim Basin of Sinkiang, had already felt the influence of Manichaeism through traders. After their contact with the inhabitants of Sinkiang, many Uighurs were converted to Buddhism. Both groups were also influenced at an early period by Nestorian Christianity. In the eighth century, when both Tibetan and Arab attacks forced the Chinese armies of Kao Hsien-chih to fall back in retreat from Sinkiang, the Uighurs turned to Islam. Although they were first converted in the eighth century, Buddhism was not completely driven out of Sinkiang until the sixteenth century. The Uighurs of Sinkiang belong to the Sunni sect and perhaps are not as strict as some other Mohammedans in their observance of the principles of the Koran, but they do have great reverence for the many Islamic rites and observances.

In the hundred and fourteen chapters of the Koran they find instruction in every question of conduct. This sacred book is the unaltered code of their life. The most important positions in the Moslem Church are held by religious leaders who have inherited their posts from a long line of ancestors and most of whom are related to the large landowners and officials who dominate Uighur society. Not surprisingly, therefore, the upper strata of Uighur society include the most ardent supporters of Islam. Their year has twelve months, their week seven days. "Mosque Day" is on Friday and is very strictly observed in Sinkiang. Five prayers are prescribed for each day, before sunrise being the most important. It is a mistake to think that these devotions are a formal mumbling of set words; no less than seven stages are set out for the worshipper. First, mental preparation; then, the raising of the hands; next, the rising to the feet; then, the reading of the Koran; next, bowing; sixth, the deep obeisance; seventh, the retiring from prayer. This ritual should be performed by all, irrespective of age or sex. Not all believers keep all five occasions of prayer, but they are far more devout than the average churchgoer of the West. Their fasts are observed with great strictness. For one whole month, in every twelve, no food may pass their lips during the daytime. Only in cases of extreme urgency may the fast be broken, in which event compensation is exacted by the "Ahun", day for day. The Ahun is the local priest. If the fast is broken without cause the penalty is to fast for two months and this is strictly enforced. When the fast is ended everyone puts on his finest clothes and for seven days a feast is observed. Seven days later comes the "Day of Butchery", on which solemn acts of worship mark the close of the year.

It is the wish of every good Moslem once in his lifetime to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The journey from Sinkiang entails great hardship, many perils of thirst in the desert, and many in the mountains. None mourns for them, however, since the journey is considered a great honor. Those who return are honored by the name "Hajji" and all look them with great respect.

6. Physical Characteristics: In appearance the Uighurs are a handsome people with jet black hair, dark, deep-set eyes, high bridged, thin prominent noses, light skin and thick facial and body hair. They are relatively tall and bearded. Some Uighurs have mongoloid facial characteristics while others, if dressed in Occidental fashion, would be accepted as Europeans without question. Physically, the present Uighur population of Sinkiang is more akin to the Alpine than the Mongoloid type. The women are exceptionally beautiful, with long eyelashes inclined upwards.
7. Dress: The Uighur man used to be distinguished by their white turbans which resulted in their being called Chien-t'ou (Turban Heads) by the Chinese. This custom, however, is rapidly dying out in the cities and now it is mostly the Ahuns who wear the turbans. The Uighur man of today is identified by his "ashupan", which is a long coat, padded with cotton and then quilted. This bright-colored

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garment has long sleeves which are pulled down over the hands in place of gloves and is tied about the waist with a kerchief. Beneath the tshupan the Uighur man wears pantaloons, usually reaching down to within about six inches of his feet, which are encased in leather boots with detachable slippers. These boots, which are worn by both the men and women are called "eitek" and come right up to the knee. Both sexes wear tiny skull-caps on the back of the head. These skull-caps are called "tebiteika" or "arakchin" and are worn the year around. They are made of common cotton cloth, or more frequently velvet. The tebiteika is either plain, beautifully embroidered with gold or silver metallic thread, trimmed with fur around the edges, or in the case of women, topped with cheery pompoms. When embroidered, the design is usually that of flowers. The ladies are often dressed similarly, but in beautiful vari-colored and gaily designed wraps which are worn knee-length. These, as in the case of the men, hide the pantaloons which are tucked under the boots. Face veils are worn under the tebiteika and often have fine lace work and a delicately embroidered fringe. Not all bother with the convention of the veil, some merely keep it thrown off the face and trailing down the back. The Uighur women who live south of the Tien Shan range adhere to this convention more strictly than those who reside north of the mountains. All the Uighur clothing, including the tebiteika, tshupan, women's wraps, etc, are predominantly green and red in color. For further color and adornment, the women use colored feathers, ornate earrings and costly bracelets. In extreme hot weather, the men wear loose white garments, girded with sashes and the women wear white robes that look very much like nightgowns.

8. Concentrations: Since the most important oases are in the Tarim Basin, the major concentration of Uighurs is south of the Tien Shan range; or in the administrative regions of Khotan, Kashgar, Aqsu and Hami. North of the mountains they are few in number and dispersed among other peoples. One reason for the greater mixture of peoples in the north is that the Dzungarian Basin has historically served as a migration route. Its present population consists of relatively new immigrants.
9. Dwellings: The Uighur population of Sinkiang live either in farmsteads scattered in the fields or in houses ranged along the narrow streets of oasis cities and towns. The houses usually consist of mud-brick apartments, like those of their Chinese neighbors save that the roof does not project and has a slight slant, grouped around open courtyards. The slight slant of the roof is hardly noticeable and does not prevent the owner from walking upon it to take the air. Goods are also stored upon the roof-tops. It is quite a common sight to see cocks and hens strolling among the piles of melons and the stacks of fuel, while dogs often stroll out on to the roof to bark at passers-by.

The living-room of the house usually has only one door, which faces north. A "sky-window" is opened in the ceiling for ventilation. The stove is dug into the wall and there is a chimney which projects high above the roof. The walls are very thick and are hollowed out on all sides for purposes of storage. In most homes the only piece of furniture is a low, small table on which food is served. The floors are strewn with rugs, often of great value, on which people sit and sleep. The rich man usually has a separate house for the reception of his guests and both this and his own dwelling are situated in well-planted gardens to which running water is plentifully supplied. During the hot months these gardens make superb retreats. Wherever the Uighurs have gone they have taken their love of trees with them. In Uighur towns the streets are often lined with tall poplars and mat-covered trellises.

10. Eating Habits: The Uighur people when compared to the other peoples of Sinkiang fall into the category of "median eaters". The two extremes are the Russians, who are considered to be the heaviest eaters, and the Chinese, who are comparatively light eaters. The average Uighur diet consists of 50% cereal, 40% meat and 10% vegetables. The common man usually has only two meals a day. Often the very poor among them cannot afford meat and so live primarily upon wheat-cake, "lapsha" (a Sinkiang form of noodle) and water. The favorite and most frequent meal of the wealthier Uighurs is a rice dish which is called "pelov", in which mutton is minced with egg, flavored with salt, pepper and oils, and garnished with onions,

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raisins and carrots. Poley is served on a huge flat dish from which all help themselves with their hands. It is considered the pièce de résistance of Uighur cookery and is served only to the most favored and distinguished guests. Other favorite Uighur dishes are "mantu", which is a small meat dumpling; "shashlik", which consists of pieces of lamb that have been soaked in vinegar and are roasted on stakes with green peppers; all types of steaming soups; fresh salad greens and local style doughnuts. They only eat mutton and beef which is usually roasted. It is only rarely that the meat is boiled or fried. Butter is a frequent ingredient in their dishes and so are certain vegetable oils. They cannot endure the least trace of lard and if, by chance, any is included in their food when they travel, they immediately vomit. Their faith also prohibits them from eating the flesh of tiger, eagle, pig, dog, serpent and crab. These animals are specifically mentioned in the Koran as being of evil character. Further taboos extend to fermented liquor, tobacco and there are special warnings against eating anything which is not perfectly fresh. Their favorite drink is tea, which they always drink with sugar.

Like all the other inhabitants of Sinkiang, their way of doing honor to a guest is to slaughter an animal of his choice and for his pleasure. Melons, mulberries, plums, pears, grapes, pomegranates, peaches, apricots, raisins and preserved meats are placed before a guest, who is free to take what he pleases. To refrain from so doing is not polite, for hospitality among the Uighurs is best repaid by enjoyment. At their feasts there is always music and those who do not join in the singing always beat time with their hands. Despite the Koran's prohibition, wine is sometimes drunk at these feasts. It is made mostly from barley, but dates and grapes are sometimes used in the fermentation. The resulting liquor is very strong. Owing to their normal habits of abstinence they are not very good drinkers and after the feasts there is usually a period of penitence.

11. Occupations: Almost the whole Uighur population of Sinkiang depends upon agriculture and subsidiary occupations. In the Aksu, Kashgar and Khotan administrative districts the Uighurs not only engage in agriculture but also in the manufacture of various handicrafts, the most famous being their Khotan rugs. A few Uighurs are also merchants. One of the two exceptions is the Dulani tribe of Uighurs who live by animal husbandry along the banks of the Yarkand and Tarim Rivers. A still smaller tribe of nonsectary Uighurs are the Lopliks, who live in the area of Lob Nor and make their living by fishing.

12. Customs:

- a. General: Uighur manners are dignified and in their daily life there is no excessive ceremony, though simple forms of politeness are observed. A young man meeting his elder crosses his hands over his chest; mutters "Salaam", the greeting of good wishes and then strokes his beard with his hand. Women greet each other by touching cheeks. Elders embrace their children and kiss them in European style.

The first important ceremony in the life of a young Uighur comes at the age of four or five years, when the whole family assembles to celebrate his circumcision.

The Uighur system of naming is quite complex. There are no surnames as we understand them. Senior relatives are all spoken of as elder brothers, while nephews and sons-in-law are called younger brothers. More distant relatives are called by their names. Thus, on becoming acquainted with a Uighur family, a stranger has a great difficulty in ascertaining the exact relationship of each. Titles such as "Khan" (Prelate), "Hadji" (one who has made the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca) and "Bey" (Capitalist) follow the proper name and become a permanent attachment to it. The endearing title of "Hodja" (Pious Master) precedes the proper name.

- b. Marriage: Uighur men usually marry before their eighteenth and the girls before their fifteenth birthday. The betrothal is pledged by a girl's father and mother and the ceremony is performed by the local Imam. The marriage ceremony is closed to outsiders and is very meaningful. There is understandable gaiety on the occasion, considerable piping, drumming and other

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forms of music accompany the ceremony. The veiled bride is finally mounted on a donkey, or horse, and borne to the house of her future husband for the completion of the ritual. No union is permitted between those reared on the same milk, but close lateral relationship is not prohibited, or unusual.

Polygamy is practiced by all Uighurs who can afford it and appears in practice to work very well. It is forbidden to take more than four wives, but ways are found to evade this prohibition. It is not uncommon to find a rich man enjoying the pleasure of the seraglio. Needless to say, polygamy offers every chance for legal complications concerning inheritance and were it not that the decisions of the Ahuns are obeyed without question there would be endless litigation in every family.

- c. Divorce: Divorce amongst the Uighurs is permissible without great formality. If the husband and wife do not prove to be compatible, each of them merely return to the homes of their parents. When the separation has been the result of a foolish quarrel every effort is made by the families concerned to arrange a reunion. Remarriage is not permitted for six months in order that there may be time for a reconciliation, but after three divorces the same couple cannot be joined again until either one or the other has had intercourse with someone else. This is to discourage undue fickleness by publicly shaming those who display it. When the husband divorces the wife, all the household goods go to her. If she separates from him, she gets nothing. In the event that there are children, the father takes the sons and the mother the daughters. A child born within one year of a divorce must be acknowledged by the husband, this is enforced when there are obvious grounds for believing that it is not his child. Unfaithful women are given public humiliation. The face is dusted with soot and she is seated backwards upon a donkey. She is thus led through the bazaars and her wickedness exposed to the public. The Uighur inhabitants of the Tarim Basin have been particularly noted for the casual relations between the sexes. Divorce is extraordinarily easy, temporary alliances are common and the family as an institution is unstable to a degree unsurpassed among peoples of the Islamic faith.
- d. Burial Rites: The burial rites of the Uighurs are very elaborate and in the case of a wealthy family cost a great deal. No delay is permitted, however, and the ceremony is usually completed within twenty-four hours after death. While the priests read from the Koran the deceased, whose head is not shaved, is wrapped in white cloth and placed in a coffin of sweet-smelling wood, over which there is placed a beautifully embroidered cover. For the burial, a great cave some ten feet deep is prepared and the corpse is slid out from the coffin to be slowly lowered into the earth, the hole being immediately filled with sand and clay. If the corpse falls face upwards the family is congratulated on the holiness of the deceased. If the corpse falls face downwards, they are pitied. If the corpse falls on the edge of the grave it is thought that the death is untimely and thus the spirit will not find rest. Every year at spring and autumn the grave is visited and made trim, for to neglect the burial-place of your parents is a grievous sin. If there is a son then the property goes to him; if there is no son, a daughter may inherit; but the law also provides that a son or daughter by a previous marriage may claim a share.
13. Good Qualities: The Uighurs have many good qualities. Honesty is their pride and they rarely break their word. They are law-abiding by nature and bear misfortune submissively. Drunkenness disgusts them and to lend money at high interest is considered disgraceful. When they swear an oath they lay their hand on the Koran, or if the sacred book is not available, stamp on cooked rice. This signifies that they will be crushed even as the rice is crushed if they break faith when once they have sworn. They are a very warm and human race. When they dance it is in couples, somewhat in the style of Europe. The favorite game of the adult Uighurs is "ulagh". This is played on horseback, in teams, and has a distant resemblance to polo. The object, though, is to retrieve the carcass of a goat or sheep. All in all, the Uighurs are a friendly, patient and warm race. They are fond of laughter, talk, music, drama, good eating, fairs and crowded markets.

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14. Bad Qualities: They are for the most part timid, pleasure-loving and indolent and cannot be relied on in an emergency. As workers, they are strong, but lazy. They are content to sit in the sun after eating and they believe that all is for the best until events prove the contrary. When this does happen, they fly to the other extreme and proclaim that all is lost.
15. Racial Problems: The Uighurs, people who speak one of the many mutually intelligible dialects of the Uighur language, are all Moslems, all share the same literary and artistic heritage, live chiefly by agriculture, have a common history, form 95% of the population in the Tarim Basin (where 90 per cent of them are concentrated) and in other respects display a high degree of uniformity. At the other extreme are the Chinese of Sinkiang, one third of whom are Moslem while two thirds are Buddhists. The Uighurs, in the past, have been prone to religious fury under the influence of a priesthood sadly inclined towards fanaticism. On the whole, however, they live on good terms with the Chinese, but rarely master the Chinese language and as this is the instrument of the government, decrees and regulations have to be interpreted. If the language difficulty could be successfully overcome, the Uighurs would be far more content and since they make up more than two thirds of the total population, this would make for the happiness and prosperity of Sinkiang.

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